

WINTER HAVEN POLICE

125 N. Lake Silver Dr., NW • Winter Haven, FL 33881 • Phone: 863-291-5858 • www.winterhavenpd.com

Date: February 5, 2014
Time: 10 A.M.
Contact: Jamie Brown – Public Information Officer
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Precursor – If this doesn't light the fire in your heart, your wood is wet!

WINTER HAVEN – Winter Haven Police have recovered a bicycle for a young autistic boy who was devastated at the initial loss.

On 1-26-14, Winter Haven Police received the report of a stolen bicycle from the driveway of a home in the area of Julius Estates off Lucerne Park Rd. in Winter Haven. The bike had been taken in broad daylight after the boy left it to go inside for a short break from riding.

The parents provided photos of the bike to officers and the information was disseminated to officers for subsequent shifts. (When victims provide photos of missing property or if representative images are able to be obtained, officers produce bulletins allowing the information to be provided to all shifts.) The case was opened and photos made available to officers.

On today's date (2-4-14), officers working an unrelated call at a residence saw a bicycle that looked familiar. After confirming the bike on scene with the above mentioned photo provided through a bulletin, the officer was able to identify the stolen bicycle. Ultimately, the stolen bicycle was returned to the child. Below is a post by the parents of the child, which outlines the importance of the recovery to this autistic child.

Winter Haven Police officers work, on average, 100 calls per day. The officers take great care and diligence in reviewing information that involves stolen property and store that information and those images in their brains for future recall. "This case of the bicycle that was identified speaks to the diligence our officers have to recover property for our citizens," said Chief Gary Hester. "The men and women here at our Department take great pride in serving the community and truly exemplify our motto, "Honor In Service."

(Below is the actual statement sent by the parents of the autistic boy. The boy, Tristan, is 12 years old. His parents, who are willing to speak to anyone who would like to contact them, are Stephanie and Nick Roller: 863-207-2803 or 863-221-5880.)

As most of you know, Tristan has autism. For the most part we don't let this define his life or his behavior. However, there are certain things that affect him more than others. He is 12 years old and never learned to ride

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a bike. We tried everything. We had the tandem bike, we had the training wheels and we ran alongside him (for as long as we actually could). At some point you accept that your kid won't ride a bike. When we moved last year, all the kids in the new neighborhood rode bikes. He was determined to ride a bike. Dad ran, as long as he could, next to him but it was such work and Tristan was getting frustrated. We decided to try adding one training wheel to a mountain bike and FINALLY he was able to practice. He was getting the hang of it and all the kids in the neighborhood encouraged and supported him even with a training wheel at 12 years old. He was so proud of himself. He practiced constantly. He practiced so hard that Santa gave him a bike for Christmas! He was so excited. Every day he would go outside and ride the bike, even when there were no other kids around to play with. A week after Christmas we were able to remove the training wheel and he was riding without anything. These are the moments you realize disabilities don't mean they can't but that it may just take longer than others.

The week we got back from our camping trip Tristan was riding bikes outside with his friends. They came inside to cool off and play video games for an hour and went back out. The bike was gone. It was stolen in the middle the day, while we were home, from our drive way. It was devastating. Tristan went everywhere to find it and dad drove around looking in the not so great areas that are nearby hoping to find it. The one thing anyone knows about Tristan is his rules. You just don't break the rules. For Tristan this was a police matter and they were going to catch the thief and that person would be in jail for the rest of their lives. We knew the chances of finding the bike were slim to none but what do you tell a child? We called the Winter Haven Police Department and explained that he just needed to feel like it was being taken care of. We understood that there was nothing they could really do.

Well we were WRONG. This morning we got a phone call from the Winter Haven Police Department letting us know they found his bike!!! Not only did they find it but it was in perfect condition! Tristan has accepted that there are bad people in the world and even though the police were working hard, the bike may not be found. He had already made plans to raise the money to get a new one. To get this call only a week later was unbelievable news! Not only have you secured the idea of justice in the mind of a child but you have restored our belief that the little things don't get overlooked. We know that this was absolute luck that a call came in at 4:45 this morning and the officers on scene just happen to recognize the bike from the pictures we gave them but we are so grateful that they took the time and that this worked out in the best possible way.

Thank you so very much for the extra effort made to bring back Tristan's bike.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Couture-Roller

Nick Roller

Colleen Wilson

Jan Little Roller

Mike Roller

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